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History of Al-Madinah Al Munawwarah

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Al-Madinah Al-Munawwarah, its Names and its Ancient History

The Foundation of Yathrib

There is a consensus in the Arabic sources that “Yathrib” was the name of a man from among the descendents of Noah عليه السلام and that this man founded this city and so it was named after him.

As for the reason for its foundation, one of the narrations states that the area to which some of the sons of Noah عليه السلام came after the flood became difficult for them to live in and so a group of them took off to the west, in search of a new place to live where they would find good sustenance. And it was the lot of a group known as 'Ubail that came to the area in which was Yathrib, and its water, its trees and its rocky area appealed to them as these formed a natural protection for it.



The First Inhabitants of Yathrib

The first inhabitants of Yathrib were from three large tribes and they were:

(a) **The Amalekites:** And it was they who founded Yathrib, according to the most authoritative narrations; and the tribe of 'Ubail – from which came Yathrib, after whom the city was named – belonged to the Amalekites. And it is obvious from their name that they were distinguished by their great height.^[3] And they were from the descendents of 'Amliq bin Laud bin Shem bin Noah. They were in the area of Babylon and then they spread to different areas throughout the Arabian Gulf and some of them took up residence in the place known as Yathrib. And there is no doubt that they were Arabs. Imam At-Tabari considered their ancestor 'Amliq to be the first person to speak Arabic.

(b) **The Jews:** When the Muslims migrated to Yathrib, they found there a number of Jewish tribes; and there is agreement that most of the Jews of Yathrib were the descendents of emigrants who came from Palestine. Some of them came as migrants after Nebuchadnezzar destroyed the Kingdom of Judea and killed many of the Jews and enslaved many of them; this took place 586 years before the start of the Christian Era (CE) (known by the Christians as BC). Likewise, other migrations took place when the Romans made an example of them in the year 70 CE, and again in the year 132 CE. And some of these migrants made their home in the area of Yathrib. And the first of the tribes which reached

^[3] The word Amalekite is derived from the Arabic word '*Amaliqah*', which means giants.

the area of Yathrib were Banu Quraizah and Banu An-Nadir, then other tribes followed them.

(c) **Al-Aws and Al-Khazraj:** They are two Qahtani tribes which migrated to Yathrib from Yemen after the destruction of Sadd Ma'arib. And the settling of these two tribes in Yathrib had a great effect upon its history. According to the most reliable reports, the two tribes arrived in Al-Madinah in the third century of the Christian Era.

The Names of Al-Madinah Al-Munawwarah

The City of Allâh's Messenger ﷺ is known by many names and the large number of names are evidence of its greatness; and its names include:

Al-Madinah: This is the name given to the famous city to which the Prophet ﷺ migrated and in which he was buried.

Tabah: Al-Madinah is known as Tabah, for the Prophet ﷺ said:

“Verily, Allâh the Almighty, the All-Powerful named it Tabah.”^[4]

And Tabah and Taibah are derived from *At-Tayyib*^[5] - and that is because it is purified from *Shirk*^[6], and every pure thing is *Tayyib*.

Yathrib: This was its first name and we have said that it was so named after the name of the man who founded it. And Allâh's Messenger ﷺ changed the old name to Al-Madinah. And it is possible that the Messenger ﷺ changed the name of

^[4] Al-Bukhari (1872) and Muslim (1396).

^[5] *At-Tayyib*: That which is good and pure.

^[6] *Shirk*: Polytheism, associating partners with Allâh.

Yathrib because the word *Tathrib* in Arabic language means blame, and it also means to corrupt and to adulterate. And it is reported in the *Sahihain*^[7] from the *Hadith* of Abu Musa ؓ, from the Prophet ﷺ, who said:

“I saw in a dream that I was migrating from Makkah to a land of palm trees and I guessed that it would be Yamamah or Hajar, but it was the city of Yathrib.”^[8]

And Abu 'Ubaidah said: “Yathrib is the name of a land and the City of the Messenger ﷺ is in one corner of it.”

And it is mentioned in *Mu'jamul-Buldan* by Yaqut Al-Hamawi: “This city has twenty-nine names and they are: Al-Madinah, Taibah, Tabah, Al-Miskinah, Al-'Adhra', Al-Jabirah, Al-Mahabbah, Al-Muhabbabah, Al-Mahburah, Yathrib, An-Najiyah, Al-Mufiyah, Akkalatul-Buldan, Al-Mubarakah, Al-Mahfufah, Al-Musallamah, Al-Mijannah, Al-Qudsiyah, Al-'Asimah, Al-Marzuqah, Ash-Shafiyah, Al-Hirah, Al-Mahbubah, Al-Marhumah, Jabirah, Al-Mukhtarah, Al-Muharramah, Al-Qasimah, Tababa.”

And it was reported in the words of the Prophet ﷺ (quoting the Words of Allâh the Most High):

﴿رَبِّ ادْخُلْنِيْ مُدْخَلَ صِدْقٍ وَّاَخْرِجْنِيْ مُخْرَجَ صِدْقٍ﴾

“My Lord! Let my entry (to the city) be good, and (likewise) my exit (from the city) be good.” [*Al-Isra'* 17:80]

They said: “(The cities of) Al-Madinah and Makkah.”^[9]

^[7] *Sahihain*: The authentic collections of *Ahadith* compiled by Al-Bukhari and Muslim.

^[8] Al-Bukhari (3622) and Muslim (2272).

^[9] At-Tirmidhi (3139) and Ahmad (223/1).